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ABSTRACT

Both literature teachers who take the time to teach historical background and history teachers who take the time to incorporate literature into their classes will help students to discover that life is multidimensional. Some practical activities are required to correlate language arts with social studies. One such activity involves assigning students to write a dialogue between two historical figures whose lives they have researched, while another asks them to write a letter to an historical figure about life in the twentieth century. These assignments show students that writing is important in both literary and historical contexts. Students can also compare different biblical versions of the creation with twentieth century renditions, then write a revised and updated version of another biblical story. While dealing with historical subjects and creative literature, students will learn how to revise and update and how to handle such problems as setting and language changes. Assigning students to write a history book on a specific period and region will teach them to investigate, think, organize, and write. Other possible exercises include creating a graffiti wall on which students can write historical facts and quotes, and having them write advertisements for historical and cultural features. (HTH)

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THE MARRIAGE OF CLIO AND SHAKESPEARE: CORRELATING LANGUAGE ARTS AND SOCIAL STUDIES

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My first year of teaching brought about my intense desire to show students how English and history accentuate each other, that history teachers should strive to learn all they can about literature and that literature teachers should learn all the history they can. A certain young man related to me, as I discussed transcendentalism in American thought, that he knew of another Ralph Waldo Emerson. Since he was in my American History class, he figured he knew something the teacher did not know. He had heard of another Emerson in literature class.

A few minutes later, the same young man realized that his Emerson and my Emerson had both compsed essays entitled, coincidentally, "The American Scholar." Then, coincidence of coincidences, my young learner found out that MY Emerson had also published a famous essay called "The Conduct of Life." Finally, my student realized that HIS Emerson and MY Emerson were the same character. "Why do we talk about Emerson in history class and in English class?" was his innocent inquiry. "Because history and English literature are married," I tried to explain. "They are inseparable, just as Romeo and Juliet were inseparable," I added. "Each one gives life and illumination to the other--Emerson was a literary figure, but his writings played a significant role in history." From that first-year-teacher experience until now, and on junior high, high school, and college levels, I have made it my business to correlate language arts and social studies.

A historian (history teacher) in the public schools must not overlook the poems, the plays, the music, or the fads. They also

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help to paint the overall picture of a historical epoch. An English (or other literature teacher) teacher cannot escape the ever-present realism of chronology and historical perspective in every literature unit. The marriage of Clio and Shakespeare can fulfill history and literature classes.

Correlating language arts and social studies requires practical activities just as it does a sound philosophical base. The following activities are ones which I have employed in the last ten years:

I. Historical Dialogue:

In order to get students to write, history can sometimes provide the necessary motivation. I have found that bringing together historical characters from two different time periods helps my students develop a purpose for writing. If a man in the first century A.D. is going to know anything about life in the fifteenth century B.C., someone is going to have to help him. That's the students' jobs.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE TEACHER:

Bring a set of encyclopedias into the class or assign each student to read about a historical character in the library (for junior high and high school students, I would suggest directing students away from encyclopedias and toward textbooks, monographs, and other reference material.) Assign each student the task of reading two articles and creating a dialogue between the two historical characters about which they have read. Each character should talk about at least two facts of his/her life. For example, have Charlemagne talking to Dwight Eisenhower, or Cleopatra discussing politics with Ronald Reagan, or Hannibal discussing tactics and strategy with Muhammad Ali.

A creative follow-up idea is to have students write to historical characters telling them about life in the twentieth century. Then, in order to give them a differnt point of view, have them become the

characters themselves and write to themselves in the twentieth century.

SUMMARY: What has been correlated?

First, students are reinforced in their thinking that writing is an important tool for both the historian and the literati. Second, students understand that literature has a historical setting, that it is a reflector of the society which produced it. Third, students are asked to be creative. Based on what they read in the encyclopedias or monographs, they must put words in Charlemagne's mouth. Lastly, students will be motivated faster to write letters to Julius Caesar and William the Conqueror than to Aunt Bertha.

II. The Bible As Literature and History:

Students need to be guided to understand that literature is everlasting. Help them to answer the question, "What is a classic?" Sometimes, literature can be presented in a way which does not motivate interest among students. The following activity sparked a great deal of interest because it allowed each student to "translate" classic Bible stories into his/her own language.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE TEACHER:

As a pre-activity, read aloud to the class the story of the Creation in the King James' Version. Then, read the same story in the Revised Standard Edition. Emphasize the linguistic changes from one translation to another.

After reading the two "traditional" accounts of this Bible story, read them James Weldon Johnson's "The Creation" (found in many good poetry anthologies). Follow this with the radio play by R.C. Scriven called "The Thingummyjig" (included in The Creative Word).

After reading the modern "Bible stories," lead students in a discussion of how the twentieth century authors used and changed the original stories. "Brainstorm" students for a list of Bible stories.

Put the list on the chalkboard. Divide the class into groups of five or six. Allow the groups to choose a chairperson. Assign each group the task of choosing and reading a Bible story from the Bible.

After each person in each group has read his/her story, have each group work together to write a revised and up-dated version of that Bible story. Allow three or four days writing time while spot-checking each group's progress. Require each chairperson to turn in a daily report of his/her group's progress. As a post-writing activity, each group shoud be allowed to perform their creation. Video-taping their plays heightens the importance of the activity and allows the class to review and revise the plays.

SUMMARY:

While dealing with historical subjects, and while dealing with creative literature, students have worked on the fine art of revising and up-dating. Settings and language changes crept into the up-dated stories, but the age-old relevance of the story was maintained. Many students came away with the knowledge of a classic.

III. Student-Made History Books

The use of student-made materials has proven to be a very effective tool in many areas, particularly language arts and social studies. There is no better device for correlating language arts and social studies. In creating history books (called "Skinny Books" in some circles) the student is encouraged to use many faculties: 1)reading 2)thinking 3)evaluating 4) writing 5)organizing and 6) synthesizing.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE TEACHER:

Divide the class into groups of five or six during a particular historical unit (i.e., the Middle East, the South, state histories, Women's history). Allow the groups to choose chairpersons.

I shall use the ancient Near East as a hypothetical example. Explain to your students that each group's task is to create its very own book on a particular ancient Near Eastern civilization (Sumerians, Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Hebrews, Hittites).

Ask each group to formulate twenty questions which they would like to answer about each group's civilization. Help them out. Ask them what people of the future would want to know about our civilization. Soon,you'll get questions like these: 1)What did they wear?, 2) what type of religion did they have?, 3) did the children have to go to school?, 4) did they like music, and MORE!

Each group should be expected to complete a book on this civilization which includes the following: 1) 10 illustrations 2) 2 maps, 3) table of contents, 4) creative cover, 5) title page, and 6) index. Have each group to make two copies of the book, one for the room and one for themselves. These books can be the basis for a good remedial interest/learning center.

SUMMARY:

A unit which requires a student to use historical subjects and requires him/her to investigate, think, organize, and write, is an interdisciplinary unit which sharpens many language arts/social studies skills. Judge for yourself.

IV. Activity/Interest Center: Historical Graffiti

Graffiti of many kinds has become a part of Americana. Kids love it! It's an expression of "their" generation (as well as mine and Marcus Cicero's). To get your students thinking about history and its correlation with literature, create a Historical Graffiti Corner.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE TEACHER:

Tape a piece of red bulletin board paper (approximately five feet by three feet) onto the wall. Draw a brick pattern on it and label the whole paper, HISTORICAL GRAFFITI. Explain to your students that only historical quotes and facts can be written on the Historical Graffiti wall. Start them off by writing the first one. When they fill one wall, put a new one.

V. Geographical Advertising: or, How about a Nice Sphinx to go With That Pyramid?

Correlating language arts and geography presents one of the toughest problems for the teacher interested in correlating language arts with social studies. One particular way to make this twain meet is geographical advertising. In this unit, students will be able to locate certain areas and points of interest on the map (As we all know, many recent reading series have included numerous map exercises as part of their reading program). Second, they will work on writing persuasively using an economy of expression. In addition, students will synthesize materials from various sources (maps, ads, books) into an entirely new medium.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE TEACHER:

Take a day from the regular routine. Make use of a geographical area under investigation by your class (or by their social studies class). Lead students in a discussion of advertising techniques--cite specific advertising gimics. Help your students understand that it takes precise language to communicate ideas effectively, as in advertising. Ask the students to create an advertisement in which they try to sell a mineral, animal, or geographical area from the area they're studying. Display the finished products.

SUMMARY:

In this unit, students have accomplished the following: 1) they have created an effective slogan or idea to sell land or other products, 2) they have sharpened their map-reading skills (and now they associate a particular animal or mineral to a particular place on the globe), 3) they have combined their slogans with artwork and dramatizations, 4) they have practiced their oral skills by having presented an oral presentation to the class. As a follow-up activity you might video-tape the commercials.

CONCLUSION:

By correlating language arts and social studies, you are helping your students across a very difficult educational bridge. In our world of departmentalization and specialization, we sometimes forget that there are a great many of us who have to be taught that the king Hygelac (Beowulf's Geatish King) we read about in Beowulf in our literature class is the same one mentioned by the medieval chronicler Gregory of Tours (History of the Franks) which we heard about in history class. Literature teachers who take the time to teach historical background, as well as history teachers who take the time to incorporate literature into their classes, are helping students across that difficult educational bridge. Furthermore, they are teaching students that life is multi-dimensional and not flat as an Egyptian wall carving (without the historical background).